

July 17, 2016

A Church Member Hebrews 10:22-25

Longer passages are not quoted in the study sheet, but they can be read in the accompanying transcript.

Many people want Jesus, but they're not _____ about the church. Some have _____ organized religion and others have started worshipping at _____. What does the Lord say about church membership? Is it the will of God?

Many people today say, "Jesus, _____; but the church, _____." They want to be Christians but not _____ of any "organized religion." Others have decided to become Christians "at large" or to establish small "house churches"; they don't want to be _____ of the organized church with elders and deacons that's mentioned in the New Testament. But, can a Christian _____ God and live apart from the church? Is attending church and being a church member _____? Or can a person just live a good life without the church and without the association of brothers and sisters? Should Christians be church members?

I'm told that eighty percent of Americans _____ that you can be a good Christian and yet not be a member of any church. This seems odd to me since the New Testament is _____ of references to the church. People forget the church is made up of the called-out people of God who are _____ by the blood of Jesus and who are devoted to following Him. The church is not some man's idea but it's God's. If you could be a member of the church of Christ, the church that He built, and if you believe and practice what the Lord teaches, wouldn't you _____ to be a part of that church? The good news is that you _____ be a member of the Lord's church.

Our reading today comes from the letter to the Hebrews, chapter 10, verses 22 to 25.

In trying to understand the _____ of the church in God's plan and scheme of things, the first thing that we must do is see the connection between Christ himself and His church. There are a number of passages that show such a _____ relationship that one can hardly think of Christ and not also think about His church. In Matthew 16:18, Jesus responded to Peter's confession that He was the Christ, the _____ of the Living God, and He said "And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock (that is, the confession) I will _____ my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." The church itself is built upon the _____ that Jesus is the Son of the Living God. Jesus built His church, and it _____ to Him!

In Acts 20:28, Paul told the elders of the church at Ephesus, "Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own _____." When I think of the purchase price that Jesus paid for the church, I can only conclude that the church must have been very, very _____ to Him. People only _____ for the things that are most important in their lives. If the church were that important to Christ, it ought to be that important to those who _____ the Lord and want to follow in His steps. The church is the _____ thing mentioned in Scripture that Jesus purchased with His blood. For this reason, we cannot please God and _____ as if the church were optional.

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Paul said that the church is so closely related to Christ that it may be called his _____, suggesting that the church is how Jesus Christ is working in the world today. Paul said, “And He put all things in subjection under His (that is, Jesus’) feet, and gave Him as _____ over all things to the church, which is His _____, the fullness of Him who fills all in all” (Ephesians 1:22-23). The head and the body are so closely connected, interconnected, that they should _____ be divided. Christ without the church is like a head without its body. Those who want Christ but _____ the church need to think through their theology. The church was Christ’s idea.

Read what Paul said in Ephesians 5:25-27. Christ loves the church with the same fervor that a husband loves his wife. When people criticize and slander the church, Jesus must feel the _____. How would you feel if people said ugly things about your family? Jesus thinks of every member of His church as His _____.

The apostle Paul also reminds us that Jesus is “the _____ of the church” and “the Savior of the body” (Ephesians 5:23). The church is not the Savior, but the “saved.” Christ is the Savior of the church. In Acts 2:47, we learn that the Lord _____ the “saved” to His church. If you are saved, the Lord has added you to His church, you’re a church _____. If you’re not in the church, then (Biblically speaking) you’re not _____ the saved. The church is not an optional thing that you can take or leave at your will. It’s the Lord’s _____ body of people whom He has saved, whom He loves, and whom He purchased with His own blood.

It is for this reason that Paul said, “For no man can lay a _____ other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 3:11). People need to be _____ with what the Lord has founded. You cannot substitute something else in its place. You can’t build your own spirituality, your own arrangement, or your own church and expect to _____ the Lord Jesus. Jesus, the Lord said, “Every plant which My heavenly Father did not plant shall be _____” (Matthew 15:13). Man-made religion doesn’t work with God. Some think they can reinvent the church, but it may end up back-firing on them. The Lord’s foundation is the _____ foundation.

We ask, “What was the church like in the New Testament?” The word “church” refers to an assembly, a congregation that has been called together for a specific _____. After Paul had established several congregations on his first missionary journey, he _____ to those congregations, strengthening and encouraging them. Acts 14:23 says, “When they had appointed elders for them in every church (congregation), having prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.” Later, Paul wrote “To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, including the overseers (that is, bishops and elders) and deacons” (Philippians 1:1).

These were organized churches with established _____. They were visible, recognizable congregations, meeting at set times, and in set locations. Paul mentions many of the _____ of the church at Philippi or Rome or Corinth by name. Yes, sometimes churches met in some family’s _____. But in those days a large house could hold a congregation. In some cases, congregations met outside or in caves. You have to remember that the church was _____ persecuted and considered illegal. The earliest church buildings date about 250 AD. Although they could not openly show themselves, they were _____ organized.

When the church of the New Testament was faced with a _____, they brought it to the apostles and later to the elders of each congregation. They didn't get _____ and start their own churches with their own doctrines and their own ways. The Hebrew writer gave instructions to members of churches, "Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your _____ as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you" (Hebrews 13:17). God wants us to fulfill His _____ and purpose for His church, not reinvent the church with our _____ ideas and designs. David said, "I was glad when they said to me, 'Let us go to the house (temple) of the LORD'" (Psalm 122:1). We too ought to be glad when we _____ today with the household of God, that is, the church. The church is God's temple today according to 1 Corinthians 3:16. Some of my most treasured moments have been spent with God's people worshiping and serving. My dearest friends are fellow _____ of the church. They've helped me and blessed me richly through the years. I look forward to being with my spiritual family at church each Lord's Day. I'm glad when they say, Let us go to church.

The notion that we can "be the church" but not be a part of any local congregation is a human _____. God's people assemble with one another. The Hebrew writer said, "and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our _____ assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near" (Hebrews 10:24-25). In the New Testament, when a Christian _____ assembling with the church, he was falling away from God. He was _____ the faith. He was hurting himself and hurting the church by returning to the _____.

Solomon said, "Iron sharpens iron, So one man sharpens another" (Proverbs 27:17). People in the church make _____ stronger, better, and more faithful and committed. Each Christian needs the _____ of love and faith that his brothers and sisters give him. Each Christian needs to so _____ and so _____ that he provides an example of commitment to the cause of Christ to those surrounding him. Saying, "Well, I love Christ, but I won't go to church," sends a _____ signal. It says I love God, but I will choose which commands I will _____ and which I will not. Such a person isn't really obeying God but he's obeying himself and obeying his own _____. Solomon said, "Two are _____ than one because they have a good return for their labor. For if either of them _____, the one will lift up his companion. But woe to the one who falls when there is not another to lift him up. Furthermore, if two lie down together they will keep _____, but how can one be warm alone? And if one can overpower him who is alone, two can _____ him. A cord of three strands is not quickly torn apart" (Ecclesiastes 4:9-12). God knew that his people needed the _____ and love that each one could give the other to grow and to remain strong in the faith. Two are better than one because they have each other.

Where would we be _____ Bible teachers and without godly examples? In the early church, God gave apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers, "for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ" (Ephesians 4:11-13). God _____ that His people

needed training and equipping to do the _____ that He called them to do: and that is to take the _____ to the world, to _____ up the church, and to render _____ to the needy.

Through the years, the church has been so good to Jackie and me. Over thirty years ago, when our four children were small, my lovely wife Jackie had to be in the hospital for several days with a back problem. We had no physical family within 500 miles at that time. The church was our _____. The church we attended in Mississippi helped us with food and cleaned our house. An older lady, Mrs. Edwards, watched our children when we had to go to the doctor. The hardest year of our lives was made better by the goodness of people who loved and cared for us. We can never forget that we had loved ones who helped us when we needed it.

When Katrina destroyed much of Louisiana and Mississippi, churches all over middle Tennessee and Kentucky raised _____ to send to their brethren affected by the hurricane. I watched truck after truck _____ with supplies and food and water go to churches where the needed items were distributed. No red tape, just brothers and sisters _____ brothers and sisters. One church of 100 members in Gonzales, Louisiana, fed 300-500 people every day for weeks. Churches gave millions of dollars to _____ this disaster. They didn't get much publicity, but the people there knew where to go to get help. They got it from God's _____, the church. I'm so grateful for what the church is doing all over everywhere, and what a difference it makes in the _____ of people. We need the church for good examples; we need the church for the teaching they give; and we need the church for the help they can give when we need help.

Someone says, "Well Phil, you just don't understand. We had a _____ experience at church and won't be going back." Many times the problem is not with the _____ church but with an individual or two who hasn't acted as he should. The Bible teaches that when a fellow Christian _____ against you that you're to go to that person privately and talk to him, trying to restore the relationship (Matthew 18:15). Many times people, rather than following the instructions of the Lord, simply just quit and _____ themselves from the godly people that they need in their lives. Don't quit the church over some _____ brother or sister. Talk to that person and work it out, and draw close to Jesus when you do it.

I became a Christian because of Jesus. He is my Lord and Savior. I want to _____ with Him forever. My pride is not as important as going to heaven. I won't let anything or anyone come _____ my God and me. I will always have to deal with rude, selfish, and immature people; but if the Lord was gracious enough to _____ me of my many sins, I can be gracious enough to forgive those who sin against me. I don't want to risk my soul by refusing to forgive a brother or sister in the church. I'd rather forgive and be forgiven than to die lost.

There's no greater honor and no greater blessing than to be a _____ of God. You can be one today, if you will. The Lord opens His heart and His hands, reaching for you with the _____. If you'll accept the gospel—that Jesus died for your sins, was buried and arose on the third day—and by _____ in Him, _____ of your sins, _____ His name before others, and by being baptized in water for the forgiveness of your sins, then you too can be a child of God. You can be His child, an heir of eternal life. Won't you do that today?